

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 6132

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SUBJ: SUMMER INSTITUTE OF LINGUISTICS DRAWS CRITICISM

1. THE SUMMER INSTITUTE OF LINGUISTICS (SIL), A VOLUNTEER GROUP ENGAGED IN LITERACY WORK WITH TRIBAL INDIANS, HAS RECENTLY DRAWN CRITICISM FROM BOTH THE POLITICAL LEFT AND RIGHT IN COLOMBIA.

2. SIL, A CALIFORNIA BASED EVANGELICAL GROUP THAT OPERATES IN

SOME TWENTY FIVE COUNTRIES, HAS 165 VOLUNTEERS IN RURAL AREAS OF COLOMBIA, WORKING WITH 37 DIFFERENT TRIBAL GROUPS. THEIR EFFORTS ARE PRIMARILY DIRECTED TO LITERACY PROGRAMS ALTHOUGH THEY ALSO TEACH AGRICULTURAL TECHNIQUES, HOME ECONOMICS, ETC. THE RURAL PROGRAMS ARE SUPPORTED BY FOUR AIRCRAFT AND A BOGOTA STAFF OF SEVEN, HOUSED IN THE MINISTRY OF GOVERNMENT. SIL DIRECTOR, WILLIAM NYMAN, STATES THAT THE GROUP DOES NOT PROSELYTIZE, OPERATE CHURCHES OR DELIVER SERMONS.

3. NYMAN STATES THAT THE SOURCE OF MUCH OF THE LEFTIST CRITICISM IS A COMMUNIST OFFICIAL IN THE BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS. SUCH CHARGES INCLUDE THAT OF SIL BEING A TOOL OF THE CIA AND OTHERWISE ASSISTING THE SCHEMES OF US IMPERIALISM IN RURAL COLOMBIA. THE
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SIL GROUPS HAVE ALSO BEEN ACCUSED OF SMUGGLING EMERALDS AND

URANIUM. MORE SERIOUS CRITICS HAVE QUESTIONED THE IMPACT OF SIL ON THE TRIBAL CULTURES AND CAST SOME DOUBT ON THE EFFICACY OF THE GROUP'S LINGUISTIC PROGRAMS.

4. SIL HAS A FORMIDABLE CRITIC IN THE PERSON OF GENERAL MATALLANA, HEAD OF THE NATIONAL SECURITY POLICE. ACCORDING TO SIL DIRECTOR NYMAN, GENERAL MATALLANA, IN HIS EARLIER CAPACITY OF ARMY COMMANDER, LED A SURPRISE INSPECTION OF THE MAIN SIL CAMP IN THE EASTERN PLAINS. ARRIVING BY HELICOPTER, THE GROUP SEALED THE CAMP FOR SIX DAYS OF THOROUGH SEARCHING, INCLUDING A DIVERS' SEARCH OF NEARBY WATERS. THE GENERAL, WHO EVIDENTLY FOUND NOTHING INCRIMINATING, REMAINS NONETHELESS CONVINCED THAT THE SIL CAMP IS INVOLVED IN SMUGGLING ACTIVITIES. QUERIED BY THE EMBASSY, MATALLANA CONFIRMED RECENT NEWS STORIES THAT HE HAS PREPARED A REPORT ON SIL WHICH CONTAINS CHARGES OF ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES BY MEMBERS OF THAT ORGANIZATION. MATALLANA SAID HE WOULD PRESENT THE REPORT TO PRESIDENT LOPEZ AND WOULD RECOMMEND SIL'S EXPULSION FROM COLOMBIA. HE SAID HE WOULD MAKE THE REPORT AVAILABLE TO THE EMBASSY AFTER HE HAD PRESENTED IT TO THE PRESIDENT.

5. AT PRESENT, SIL IS NEGOTIATING A NEW AGREEMENT WITH THE GOC. THE EARLIER (1962) AGREEMENT CALLS FOR IT TO REMAIN IN FORCE UNTIL THE GOC SHOULD GIVE ONE YEAR'S NOTICE OF INTENTION TO TERMINATE SAID AGREEMENT. NYMAN HAS SAID THAT NO SUCH NOTICE HAS BEEN GIVEN.

6. IT IS PROBABLE THAT SIL WILL REMAIN AN ATTRACTIVE TARGET FOR LEFTIST GROUPS. THE FACT THAT MOST OF THEIR PROGRAMS TAKE PLACE IN REMOTE RURAL AREAS MAKES IT EASY TO ACCUSE THEM OF VARIOUS MISDEEDS WITH LITTLE NEED FOR SUPPORTING EVIDENCE. THE FIXATION OF GENERAL MATALLANA (PARA 4) AND A SOMEWHAT PROTECTIVE AND PROPRIETARY ATTITUDE AMONG COLOMBIANS TOWARD THE INDIANS WITH WHOM SIL WORKS ALL APPEAR TO INDICATE FUTURE PROBLEMS AND LITTLE SUPPORT FOR SIL IN COLOMBIA.

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